

Gambling began in Nevada long before it became a territory in 1861. From the "thimble rig" game that fleeced passing emigrants, to the green tables operated by the Chinese where prospectors gambled their day's profits, gambling was to become very much a part of life in a mining town. The discovery of the Comstock Lode's large and rich veins saw gambling grow in proportion to the wealth extracted from what then seemed an inexhaustible supply. From the situation developed opposing views toward gambling. From the territorial bill in 1861 that declared gambling a felony, through the constitutional convention, and the State Legislatures that enacted laws prohibiting gambling, efforts were made to discover the balance between two extremes. The Legislature of 1869 overrode the governor's veto of a bill to legalize gambling in Nevada. Succeeding legislation attempted to control the ill effects gambling had on families. Between 1877 to 1907 there were regulations that addressed the major problems in gambling, such as location, population ratio relative to license fees, hours of operation, and cheating. At the same time there was a growing awareness of gambling as another source of revenue for the state.



In 1909 the anti-gambling forces scored a victory, and the state witnessed what was considered the demise of gambling on September 30, 1910. Even with police enforcement, there were problems with the interpretation of the statutes as to when a game was a licit pastime and when was it a felony.

In 1931 because of new legislation, the state saw the beginning of the modern era of legalized gambling. Afterwards, the growing significance of the revenues that gambling earned for the state and county coffers was underlined when gambling was placed under the Nevada Tax Commission in 1945. By 1955 the Nevada State Tax Commission was granted sweeping powers to administer the provisions of the act, and the State Gaming Control Board was created as its enforcement and investigative unit. Despite the increased authority and powers given to the Tax Commission and the Gambling Control Board, the industry became more and more subject to pressures from within as well as without as revenues from gambling added considerable wealth to the state.

In consideration of problems related to the industry, Governor Grant Sawyer requested from the 1959 Legislature a complete overhaul of the gaming control machinery. The Legislature's response was the Nevada Gaming Control Act, passed on March 30, 1959. The act removed the Tax Commission from its role in gaming, and in its place established the Nevada Gaming Commission, making the State Gaming Control Board its audit, investigative, and administrative arm. In order to give the governor more voice in gaming control matters, the establishment of a Gaming Policy Board was approved by the Legislature in March 1961. In 1993 the Nevada Racing Commission was eliminated, and its responsibilities transferred to the Gaming Commission, so that today, the Nevada Gaming Commission is the ultimate authority in all gambling matters. It has the sole responsibility for issuing or denying licenses, and collecting state gaming taxes and fees.

Photo credit: The Joint Gaming Policy Committee meeting of the Nevada State Gaming Commission and the Nevada Gaming Control Board in Las Vegas, July 6, 1979. Governor Robert List is seated at the head of the table; Harry Reid is to his left. Courtesy of Nevada State Archives, LIS-1660.

**Records Description**

Dates: 1959-1994

Volume:  
96.3 c.f.

**Minutes / Transcripts of Meetings**

1959-1992

46 c.f.

Fifty percent of the collection is made up of the minutes and transcripts of the meetings of the Commission, where the bulk of the gaming business and practices were discussed and judgments made about gaming issues. The arrangement is chronological.

The following series titles reflect the activities taken up in Commission meetings and were originally filed as separate titles.

<b>Legal Proceedings</b>	1959-1994	29 c.f.
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The legal files of the Commission consist of the complaints against gambling institutions and/or persons employed thereat, for violations of the gaming policies and regulations in force in the state. The files contain proceedings and exhibits, a number of which are sealed and marked CONFIDENTIAL. The arrangement is alphabetical by name of the institution or person.

<b>Statutes and Regulations/ Misc. Proposals</b>	1959-1982	4 c.f.
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Statutes and regulations governing the gaming business. The file includes miscellaneous proposals for the interpretation of the regulations in particular cases.

<b>Petitions for Re-determination of Audit Assessment and Claims for Refunds</b>	1975-1992	6 c.f.
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Records of petitions filed by the various gambling institutions for an audit review and for refunds claimed.

<b>Excluded Persons</b>	1960-1987	4.3 c.f.
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Record of persons "whose prior activities pose a threat to the public interest of the State of Nevada and its efforts to effectively regulate and control gaming." Also known popularly as the "Black Book," it lists individuals who are prohibited from entering casinos.

<b>Policy Committee</b>	1960-1984	4 c.f.
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Files of the Policy Committee, including policy statements issued.

<b>Attorneys and Agents Enrolled</b>	1956-1990	3 c.f.
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Files of attorneys and agents enrolled and certified to practice in the legal proceedings related to gaming.